Unconventional as Zulfiqar

Iran's Military Doctrine

Ahmed Ramy Abouelela

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30/8/2025

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Preface: The purpose

There are two purposes behind this humble work. The first is to test myself – to see whether I truly understand the topic and to express some of my own opinions on it. The second is to create something simple, engaging, and drawn from various sources, so that others can understand the subject and become more aware of it. My desired outcome is that this work proves useful to at least one person.

Introduction

In the sweeping story of Iran, where you can almost hear the clash of Rostam's sword and the quiet prayers for martyrs, there's a special way of thinking about defence that goes beyond just moving troops around. Iran's way of protecting itself isn't just based on what makes sense in the world of politics; it's deeply tied to their faith, old stories, and the hard lessons they've learned from past wars. This approach came about after their revolution and got tougher during the Iran-Iraq War. It's a mix of old Persian warrior ways and up-to-date ideas about fighting in tricky situations.

Just like Rostam, the famous hero who stood up for Iran against all sorts of enemies, Iran's military thinking today is about protecting their country and also about their dreams for the future, inspired by their beliefs. At the heart of this is the idea of Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist, meaning the Supreme Leader has a God-given job to not only lead Iran but also guide Muslims everywhere. This big task means Iran sees its job of defending itself as going way past its own borders, turning local fights into big battles between what's right and wrong.

A lot of strength for this way of thinking comes from a sad event called Karbala, where Imam Hussein gave up his life to stand up for what he believed was the true Islam. This moment, where someone bravely faced defeat, is a key part of Iran's military ideas. It makes them ready to take big losses if it means doing what they believe is right according to God. The idea of becoming a martyr isn't just a way to fight; it's a goal that turns regular soldiers into people fighting for a holy cause.

Chapter 1: From Ancient Warriors to Islamic Guardians: The Roots of Persian Military Ideas

Way back when Persia was just getting started, people believed in this big battle between good and bad, with a god named Ahura Mazda fighting against Ahriman. This idea became the basis for how Iran thought about war and the world. The core of Iran's military thinking goes all the way back to its ancient roots. The old Persian thought that good and bad were always fighting set the stage for how the Islamic Republic later saw the world and planned its military moves.

There's this old Persian warrior god named Mithra. People thought of him as a symbol of courage and strength. He was the kind of warrior that Iranians admired, seen as this super-skilled guy with fast arrows and strong horses, always ready to defend people from evil. Mithra wasn't just a warrior; he was the first idea of the Persian soldier as someone who stood up for what's right against darkness.

The Shahnameh, a book of epic stories by Ferdowsi, tells about Rostam, a hero who showed what it meant to be a Persian warrior. Rostam's tale isn't about winning battles, but about making sacrifices for his country. These old stories still matter today. They give context to ideas like holy defense, which is the idea of defending your country no matter the cost.

When Islam came to Persia, it changed the way people thought about the military. Instead of getting rid of old Persian ways, Islam mixed with them. When Persia became mainly Shiite Muslim during the Safavid era, it really changed the military thinking, This change was very important for how Iran’s military ideas grew. Shiite Islam says it's right to fight against unfair rulers. This idea gave people a reason to start movements of resistance and use different kinds of fighting tactics

The idea of taqiyya, or hiding your beliefs to stay safe, became key in Iranian military strategy. It started as something for Shiites to do when they were ruled by Sunnis, but it became a way to use tricks and indirect actions to reach bigger, spiritual goals. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said back in 2012 that taqiyya, along with having pride and being wise, is what Iranian foreign policy is all about. They think it's okay to not show their true intentions if it helps them in the long run.

Also, Shiites believe in the Hidden Imam, or Imam al-Mahdi, who they think will come back someday to make the world fair for everyone. This belief adds a religious element to Iran's military plans. They see it as their duty to make the world ready for his return. This is why Iran gets involved in other countries and supports groups in those countries. They believe they're helping to make the world a better place for when the Imam returns.

Chapter 2: Where Ideas Met Fire

How the Iran-Iraq War Shaped Iran's Military Thinking

The Iran-Iraq War, a brutal eight-year slugfest from 1980 to 1988, wasn't just a conflict; it was a testing ground where Iran hammered out its modern way of war. Called the Sacred Defence or Holy Defence in Iran, this war gave them the real-world experience that shaped almost everything about how they think about strategy today. You can't talk enough about how this war impacted

their ideas about fighting – it turned theories into hard-won lessons and made the idea of dying for your cause a key part of their military plans.

At the start, it was clear that the old ways of doing things, the military approaches they'd picked up during the Shah's time, just weren't going to cut it. The revolution in 1979 had gutted the officer ranks, leaving the new government short on experienced military leaders. But this weakness actually pushed them to get creative. Facing Iraqi troops with better Western gear and backing from other countries in the area, Iranian commanders had to come up with sneaky, uneven ways to fight, using their large number of soldiers and strong beliefs to their advantage.

Those human wave attacks, where tons of Iranian soldiers charged enemy lines, weren't just desperate moves. They showed a clear choice in how they wanted to fight. Sure, they lost a lot of people, but these attacks proved that having super strong religious faith could be a weapon. It showed that believing in something could make up for not having the best equipment. Those young Basij volunteers, willing to run across minefields to clear the way, became a symbol of Iran's toughness and a big part of how the government tried to scare off enemies.

The Rise of the Revolutionary Guard Corps

The Iran-Iraq War also saw the rise of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as the main tool for putting Iran's military ideas into action. Originally formed in 1979 to keep an eye on the regular army (Artesh), the IRGC grew during the war into a whole separate military with its own land, sea, and air forces. Unlike the regular army, the IRGC was designed to be all about loyalty to the revolution, even if it meant bending the rules of traditional military conduct.

The way the IRGC was set up showed what the government cared about most. The force was based on the idea of total obedience to the supreme leader, like how Imam Ali's followers acted at the Battle of Siffin. The memory of Imam Hussein's sacrifice at Karbala was used to inspire IRGC soldiers to accept huge losses to achieve their goals.

The creation of the Quds Force within the IRGC was a big step in how Iran thought about military action. Started as the Ramadan Headquarters in 1983, the Quds Force became the main way Iran projected its power outside its borders. Its goal was deeply tied to their beliefs – to get the world ready for the return of the Hidden Imam by spreading Islamic rule across the area.

What the War Taught Them

The Iran-Iraq War taught Iranian strategists some hard lessons that stuck with them and became part of their military thinking. First, they learned that Iran's location and size could be used to their advantage, letting them take a beating and keep fighting. The war showed that Iran's large territory, rough landscape, and big population could help them even when they didn't have the best technology.

Second, the war proved that uneven tactics could work against enemies with better tech. Iranian forces got good at finding and using their enemies' weak spots – things like their fear of taking casualties, their reliance on fancy equipment, and their need for bases in the area. These insights led to Iran's focus on ballistic missiles, using other groups to fight their battles, and strategies to keep enemies out.

Third, the war established the idea of forward defence – that Iran is safer when it confronts threats far from its own land. This idea, which came about in response to Iraq's aggression, led Iran to believe that messing around in other countries was the best way they can keep themselves safe.

Chapter 3: The Sacred Defense System – How It's Set Up and Commanded

The Big Boss: The Supreme Leader

At the very top of Iran's military food chain is the Supreme Leader (*Vali-ye Faqih*). He's not just a commander-in-chief but seen as the stand-in for a super important religious figure. This belief makes Iran's military setup way different than other countries. The Supreme Leader gets his power not from any law or vote, but from what they see as a divine order. This makes how he commands things a whole different ball game than your usual civil-military stuff.

Since 1989, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has been the Supreme Leader, and he's made it his mission to make sure everyone in the military is super loyal to him. This is based on the religious thinking that worldly power should listen to religious guidance. Because of this, the military thinks about religious ideas just as much as actual battle plans.

The Supreme Leader can talk directly to the IRGC without going through the regular government. This makes sure that Iran's best military guys are loyal to the revolution, not just whoever is elected. They learned this the hard way back in the early days of the revolution when fights between the IRGC and the president almost caused a civil war.

Two Armies: Artesh and IRGC

Iran's military is split into two on purpose. It's for both keeping the country safe and sticking to their beliefs. The regular army (Artesh) is like the old guard from before the revolution. They're in charge of defending Iran the usual way, but their power is limited so they can't mess with the revolutionary system.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is the main military force, with around 125,000 people as of 2024. They've come a long way from just being an internal security force. Now, they have ground troops, navy, air power, and spies. More importantly, the IRGC is how Iran carries out its plans in the region through the Quds Force.

The Artesh and IRGC don't always see eye-to-eye. Even though they're supposed to work together, they often fight over money and influence. The Armed Forces General Staff is supposed to keep them in line, but really, it's just another way for the Supreme Leader to stay in control.

The Basij: Not Just a Militia

The Basij (Organization for the Mobilization of the Oppressed) is what makes Iran's military setup unique. Started by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979, the Basij is a mix of a volunteer army, a social movement, and a way for the government to keep tabs on people.

With about 4-5 million volunteers, the Basij is one of the biggest volunteer armies out there. They have bases all over the place, usually at mosques, which lets the government know what's going on in every corner of Iran. About a third of students and most government workers are part of the Basij, making it a huge network of people loyal to the government.

The Basij isn't just about having a lot of people. During the Iran-Iraq War, Basij volunteers were used in massive attacks, showing they were willing to take huge losses. This made the Basij a symbol of Iran's warning to anyone thinking of invading – that they would face not just soldiers, but the whole country ready to fight back.

The way the Basij is set up is based on religious ideas. Basij members are in resistance bases, like the old forts where warriors kept watch for enemies. They also have regular religious classes and remember those who died for their beliefs.

The Quds Force: Taking the Revolution Abroad

The Quds Force is Iran's most advanced military tool and how they carry out their plan to defend their interests far from home. Started in 1983 as the IRGC's foreign operations wing, the Quds Force has become Iran's main way to show its power in the region.

The name Quds itself is important. It refers to Jerusalem, showing that the force's goal is to free holy sites from foreign control. This turns local conflicts into religious duties, which motivates both Iranian fighters and their local allies.

The Quds Force has a long-standing plan for building up militias, developed over decades. They start by finding groups that fit their needs – usually religious minorities who are being mistreated or groups with anti-Western views. Then, they give them training, weapons, and money while teaching them to be loyal to Iran.

This has worked well in many different places. From Hezbollah in Lebanon to the Houthis in Yemen, these groups have things in common: they have real problems in their communities, can operate on their own, and listen to Iran's overall plans while doing their own thing on the ground.

Chapter 4: The Cornerstones of Power – How Iran Plans and Fights

Iran's Idea of Forward Defense

At its core, Iran's way of thinking about strategy revolves around what they call forward defense (*defa-ye pishraftan).* Basically, they think they're safest when they deal with dangers far from their own ground. This idea popped up during the Iran-Iraq War and has since grown into a wide-ranging plan for the area, explaining why Iran gets mixed up in conflicts all over the Middle East.

In 2019, Iran's main leader, Ali Khamenei, pretty much laid down the law when he said, We can't just stay inside our borders. We have to spot and fight threats even outside our walls. This turns a defensive strategy into something more like taking the fight to the enemy, letting Iran justify butting into regional issues as just protecting itself.

This forward defense thing is built on a few key assumptions. First off, Iran sees itself in a hostile world, mainly run by the United States and its buddies in the region. Second, they think these enemies are trying to cut them off, weaken them, and eventually kick out the current government. And third, they believe just sitting back and defending their own territory isn't enough. Iran feels it has to actively shape what's going on around them to stay safe.

When you look at the geography involved, this strategy stretches Iran's defense all the way to the Mediterranean Sea. A former commander, Major General Yahya Rahim Safavi, once said that Iran's defensive border is actually the southern border of Lebanon with Israel, and that their strategic defense reaches the Mediterranean and gets close to Israel. This broad view of what Iran

considers its security zone means they can justify getting involved militarily in places like Lebanon and Syria.

The Axis of Resistance: Iran's Strategic Playbook

To put this forward defense idea into action, Iran mainly uses something called the Axis of Resistance (*mehvar-e moghavemat*). It's like a network of friendly groups and proxy forces that lets Iran spread its influence across the region while keeping it a bit unclear just how much control Iran really has.

The Axis of Resistance works in a way that balances keeping things coordinated centrally with allowing groups to do their own thing locally. Iran learned from the old Soviet Union that if you control your proxy groups too tightly, they can be easily wiped out with a few well-placed attacks, and the locals might turn against you for being controlled by foreigners. So, Iran's way is to help these groups build up their own capabilities while giving them strategic guidance and stuff they need.

You can't ignore the religious side of the Axis of Resistance either. Iran presents it as a team of the underdog fighting against global arrogance. This idea comes from Shiite beliefs about standing up to unfair authority and sticking up for those who are pushed around. It's flexible enough to include both Shiite and Sunni groups, like how Iran supports Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

Some of the main players in the Axis include Hezbollah in Lebanon, different Shiite militias in Iraq, Alawite forces in Syria, the Houthis in Yemen, and Palestinian resistance groups. Each one is in a different situation with its own problems and chances. But they all have some things in common: they have real reasons to be unhappy with their situation, they can operate on their own, and they listen to Iran's strategic advice.

Fighting Smart: Iran's Asymmetric Approach

Iran's military thinking openly embraces asymmetric warfare, seeing it as both a practical need and something almost divinely ordered. This approach acknowledges that Iran can't match the military power of potential enemies like the United States and Israel. But it also reflects some deeper cultural and religious ideas that set Iranian strategic thinking apart from typical military doctrine.

The religious basis for asymmetric warfare comes from the Battle of Karbala, where Imam Hussein chose to fight against overwhelming odds rather than give in to unjust rule. This sets the example that being at a disadvantage doesn't mean you should surrender. Instead, it's a chance for

spiritual victory through righteous sacrifice. The IRGC even has something called the Ashurai pillar to make this connection clear.

Iranian asymmetric doctrine focuses on a few key things. First, it tries to take advantage of enemy weaknesses rather than going head-to-head with their strengths. They see American and Israeli forces as superior in technology but vulnerable psychologically. They think they're sensitive to casualties, avoid risks, and rely too much on technology. Second, asymmetric tactics aim to drag out conflicts and spread them out, forcing enemies to fight on multiple fronts. And third, asymmetric warfare uses Iran's advantages in manpower, strategic depth, and ideological motivation.

From this asymmetric thinking came the idea of mosaic defense. It envisions Iran's territory as broken up into defensive areas, each able to resist independently even if central command is disrupted. The doctrine admits that Iran can't stop an enemy from initially getting into its territory, but it aims to make occupying it too costly to be worth it.

Ballistic Missiles: Iran's Sword of Faith

Iran's ballistic missile program is super important in the country's military doctrine. It acts as a way to deter attacks, project power, and symbolize technological independence. The program started during the Iran-Iraq War when Iraqi missile attacks on Iranian cities showed how valuable long-range strike capabilities could be.

But the religious importance of Iran's missile program goes beyond just military value. Hassan Tehrani-Moghadam, who's seen as the father of Iran's missile program, directly linked the effort to Iran's ultimate religious mission. He said that when he dies, people should write on his grave that he was the one who wanted to destroy Israel. This turns building missiles from just a technical project into a sacred duty.

Iranian missile doctrine emphasizes a few key capabilities. First, missiles let Iran strike important targets throughout the region, like Israeli cities and American bases. Second, missile attacks can mess up enemy operations by targeting critical infrastructure and military installations. And third, the threat of missile retaliation acts as a deterrent against attacks on Iranian territory.

The missile program also shows Iran's dedication to being technologically self-sufficient. After the international arms embargo that followed the 1979 revolution, Iran had to develop its own defense capabilities. The missile program became a symbol of this effort, showing that Iran could develop complex military technologies despite being isolated internationally.

Recent developments have made the missile program an even bigger deal in Iranian doctrine. Combining unmanned systems with missile capabilities has opened up new possibilities for precise strikes and sustained campaigns. And developing hypersonic and maneuverable warheads aims to get around advanced air defense systems.

Chapter 5: Iran's Naval Game – Protecting the Persian Gulf

How Iran Plays the Sea Game

Over the last few years, Iran has seriously upped its naval game. It’s not just about playing defense in its own backyard, the Persian Gulf, anymore. Now, Iran's aiming to throw its weight around in seas much farther away. You see them getting bolder, and it shows in how they're building up their sea power.

For Iran, everything still comes back to the Persian Gulf. It's their main defense line. You can't talk enough about how important this waterway is. A big chunk – we’re talking around 20-30% – of the world's oil goes through the Strait of Hormuz. That gives Iran a pretty strong hand in the world's economy. They've made it clear: mess with Iran, and they might just shut that passage down.

Iran’s navy is split into two teams that work together. First, you've got the regular navy. They handle the big warships and submarines, cruising around the Persian Gulf and beyond. Then there's the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN). These guys focus on the sneaky stuff – using fast boats, mines, and surprise tactics.

This long arm idea is about Iran wanting to be a player on the world stage when it comes to naval power. The top leader, Khamenei, is really pushing this. The plan is to have Iranian ships hanging out in places like the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea all the time. Why? They want to show they've got reach. They're also thinking ahead, preparing for possible attacks. And basically, they're trying to set up defenses before anyone even thinks about messing with them.

The IRGC Navy: Masters of Asymmetric Maritime Warfare

People see the IRGC Navy as Iran's most creative and tough naval group. Their thing is fighting smart, not hard. They know they can't go head-to-head with the big boys in a straight-up fight. So, they're all about using the environment to their advantage, like narrow channels and tight seas.

The IRGC Navy loves using what are called swarm attacks. Imagine a bunch of small, fast boats loaded with missiles. The goal is to come at bigger ships all at once. It's hard for the enemy to

defend against so many things at once. This is how Iran thinks in general: use a lot of something, and get creative to beat someone who's better equipped.

They're also big on using weapons and tactics that people don't expect. Sea mines are a big deal for them. Iran's got one of the biggest collections of these things in the world. The IRGC Navy has gotten good at planting these mines secretly, using small boats and even divers. They've shown they can quickly block off important waterways, which could mess up shipping for a long time.

Adding drones to the mix has changed things too. These drones can scout ahead, keep an eye on things, and even be used as flying bombs against important targets. When you mix these drones with regular ships, it creates a tricky situation for anyone trying to defend against them.

Strategic Spots and Using the Land

Iran's naval plans are all about making the most of their long coastline and where they're located. The Persian Gulf is narrow, which is good for the people defending it. Iran can use missiles on land and cannons on the coast to control who comes and goes.

The IRGC has beefed up islands in the Persian Gulf, like Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa. They've put in lots of missiles to shoot down planes and defend against attacks, along with soldiers on the ground. From these spots, Iran can stop ships from going where they want in the southern part of the Gulf.

Where Iran puts its naval bases says a lot about what they're trying to do – both defend themselves and show their power. Bandar Abbas is the main hub for the navy and where they build submarines. Jask is like a forward base out in the Gulf of Oman, and Chabahar gives them a way into the Indian Ocean. The Imam Ali Base in Chabahar helps them defend their territory and send ships out on long trips.

Iran is also building naval bases underground. These hidden spots, dug into cliffs and islands, can survive air attacks and keep working. They reportedly have places for submarines to hide, missile storage, and command centers.

Chapter 6: Aerospace Power

The Guardians of Iranian Skies: The Aerospace Force

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Aerospace Force stands as a crucial part of Iran's military. It's in charge of the country's collection of ballistic missiles, air defenses, and drone

aircraft. The formation of this force showed that Iran realized it couldn't keep up with the air power of other countries in the area using old-fashioned methods, so it needed new ways to handle aerospace warfare.

Instead of focusing on attacking from the air, Iran's aerospace plans are more about defending its own territory. While the Iranian air force still has some older planes that it uses, it's not really able to compete with the air forces of countries like Israel or the United States. So, Iran's plan is to build a complete air defense system that can make any attacking force pay a heavy price.

One thing that makes Iran's approach to military strategy unique is how it uses ballistic missiles in its air operations. Most air forces use manned planes to strike targets far away. But Iran uses ballistic and cruise missiles as its main way to project power. This helps Iran avoid the dangers of using manned planes, which can be shot down by strong air defense systems.

It's impossible to ignore the religious aspect of Iran's aerospace power. The missile program is openly described as a tool for divine punishment, and the weapons are named after religious ideas. For example, the Shahab missiles are named after Meteors, the Sejjil missiles are named after Hardened Earth, and the Emad missiles are named after Pillar. These names add a spiritual meaning to the missiles, suggesting they're intended to be instruments of holy warfare.

The Silent Sentinels: Unmanned Systems

Iran has become a major player in creating and using drones. It uses them for spying, watching, and even attacking. The drone program shows how Iran focuses on unique tactics that allow it to use technology to make up for its disadvantages in traditional warfare.

Instead of trying to build a few very advanced drones, Iran focuses on making a lot of drones that are simple but get the job done. This forces enemies to face a difficult situation because they have to defend against many cheap threats using expensive defense systems.

Using drones strategically has become a key part of Iran's military actions. Iranian forces and their allies have used drones a lot in conflicts in places like Syria and Yemen. This has given them valuable experience and shown others what Iran is capable of.

Iran's decision to give drone technology to its allies has greatly increased their strength. By providing these groups with their own drone capabilities, Iran has been able to extend its power and influence without being directly involved. This allows Iran to have a say in conflicts all over the region without having to send in its own troops.

The Shield of Faith: Air Defense

Iran's air defense plan is to create a layered defense system that makes attacking from the air difficult and unpredictable. Iran knows it can't stop every enemy air attack, but it wants to cause enough damage to discourage them from continuing their attacks.

By combining systems bought from Russia with systems it has built itself, Iran has created a complicated air defense system. The S-300 and other advanced systems can hit targets far away, while shorter-range systems provide overlapping coverage that makes it tougher for enemy planes to fly through. Also, the use of mobile systems makes the defense system less predictable.

Iran's air defense plans focus on having backup systems and making sure they can survive attacks. Multiple systems provide coverage for important areas, and mobile launchers can move around to avoid being targeted. Underground facilities protect key systems from attack, ensuring that they can keep running even after the first strikes.

The psychological aspect of air defense is also important. Even air defenses that aren't completely effective can affect how the enemy plans its attacks. It may force them to use more resources to try to take out the defenses, which could limit what they can do overall. Just having trustworthy air defenses can make the enemy think twice and act as a deterrent.

Chapter 7: How Iran's Military Bucks the Trend – The Economics of Staying Ready

Building Swords at Home: Iran's Homegrown Defense Industry

Against all odds, Iran built a military-industrial machine that's one of the most complete in the developing world. It wasn't by choice, but by necessity, fueled by a serious belief in doing things themselves. After the 1979 revolution, the world slapped an arms embargo on Iran. They had to start making their own stuff, turning a weak spot into a point of pride but with the program slowed down due to lack of equipment availability after a long time.

How Iran organizes its defense industry shows what's important to the people in charge. The Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics is like the boss of five big groups:

- Iran Electronics Industries (IEI): They handle all the tech and communication stuff.

- Defence Industries Organization (DIO): This is where the big guns and vehicles come from.
- Aerospace Industries Organization (AIO): They make missiles.
- Aviation Industries Organization (IAIO): If it flies (planes, helicopters), they build it.
- Marine Industries Organization (MIO): They're in charge of ships and other naval equipment.

The Defence Industries Organization is super important. It's the heart of Iran's military production. With over 300 smaller companies under its umbrella, it makes everything from tanks to ballistic missiles. But it doesn't just build things; it also researches and develops new military tech. It also had a hand in Iran's nuclear program, with some of its companies making centrifuges.

Iran mixes civilian and military production, which helps both. Many defense companies also make things for regular people. That way, they can keep their factories running and their skills sharp, even when the military isn't buying as much. This system has been crucial for staying competitive even with international sanctions.

Sanctions: A Surprising Boost for Making Things

The sanctions against Iran actually made its military stronger. They had to get creative and find ways to make things themselves instead of relying on imports. Instead of crippling Iran's defense, the sanctions pushed them to find local solutions that often work even better than what they used to buy from other countries. Now it is not relying on other's technology. It has it's own.

Iranian defense planners are all about creating sanctions-proof military gear. They want stuff they can make completely from resources found within Iran. This means investing big in basic industries like steel, electronics, and machining, which helps the whole economy. The result is a defense industry that doesn't need to depend on foreign suppliers.

The sanctions have also forced Iran to create clever ways to get around international restrictions. While these networks technically break the rules, they show a deep understanding of global trade and tech. The skills they've learned can be used for more than just buying defense equipment.

Things are moving toward Iran's defense industry becoming truly independent in key areas. They're making ballistic missiles, naval systems, and unmanned vehicles using mostly Iranian-

designed parts. This is a big win that makes Iran safer and less vulnerable to pressure from other countries.

Logistics and Supply Chains: Keeping the Military Moving

Iran's military has a tough job keeping its forces supplied because of international sanctions and tense relationships in the area. They have to support troops in different places, keep reserves on hand, and keep factories running.

The IRGC has built up logistics networks to support its operations in other countries. These networks move weapons, equipment, and advisors across borders without getting caught. The fact that they can support forces in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen at the same time shows they're very good at organizing things.

Moving things by sea is one of Iran's strengths. The Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) handles both civilian and military cargo, often using regular commercial ships to move military supplies. This gives them flexibility and lets them deny what they're really doing.

Iran is also building underground facilities to protect its military supplies. These facilities, dug into mountains and hillsides around the country, can withstand air attacks and still be easily accessed for military operations. Building these bunkers is a major investment in being prepared for anything.

Chapter 8: Theology's Role – Shiite Beliefs Meet Military Action

The Idea of Rule by Islamic Jurist: God's Authority in Practice

The notion of rule by Islamic jurist (*velayat-e faqih*) is the rock-solid belief that underpins Iran's whole military setup. It turns what might seem like ordinary military choices into things they have to do for religious reasons. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini came up with this idea, and it got baked into Iran's laws. It basically says the top religious leader has a God-given right to run not just Iran, but to steer Muslims everywhere toward what's fair and right.

What this idea means for the military goes way beyond regular stuff you see between a country's leaders and its army. See, the Supreme Leader doesn't get his power from people voting for him or from some law. Nah, he gets it straight from God, as if he's the stand-in for the Hidden Imam think of it like a messiah figure. This makes for a chain of command where religion trumps regular military thinking; faith can beat out what might make sense from a purely war or political point of view.

This idea shapes how Iran thinks about war at every step. Whether a plan is good or not isn't just about whether it will work on the war zone but also whether it lines up with Islamic ideas and helps get things ready for when the Hidden Imam comes back. They see themselves preparing the world.

This idea of *velayat-e faqih* gives them a religious reason to stick their noses into things all over the Muslim world. In their eyes, the Supreme Leader is in charge of all Muslims who are getting a raw deal, no matter where they're from or what kind of Muslim they are. This way of seeing things turns regular fights into big battles between good and bad. It is a very old way to look at warring that has been passed down for centuries.

Karbala: Dying for What You Believe In

The story of Karbala is super important. It's where Imam Hussein chose to die rather than give in to what he thought was wrong. This event gives Iran's military thinking its heart and soul. Every year, they remember it in big ceremonies. It teaches them that it's okay to take huge losses if you're fighting for something that's right. It is the story that shapes their entire outlook.

The Battle of Karbala teaches them some important things. First, it doesn't matter if you're weaker. If you're right, you fight anyway. Second, even if you seem to lose, you can still win if it gets others to keep fighting. Third, if you're willing to give up everything, it proves you really believe in what you're doing, and that makes you better than people who just care about power. The battle of Karbala has become a symbol for soldiers to look up to and has been for a long time.

Iranian military groups talk about Karbala all the time. It's part of who they are. For example, the Guardians of Karbala fought in the Iran-Iraq War and more recently in Syria. The Basij trains its people to think of their military service as getting ready to die for Islam. It is a great honor within their culture.

Thinking about dying for your faith (*shahada*) changes military service from just a job into something holy. This has a big effect because soldiers who are okay with dying act differently than regular soldiers. They are much more willing to sacrifice everything for their mission.

The Art of Lying for God

The Shiite idea of *taqiyya* (hiding what you really think) started as a way for Shiite Muslims to survive when they were ruled by Sunnis. Now, it's become a sneaky trick in Iran's military

playbook. It says it's okay to lie and be sneaky if it's for a good religious reason. Deception is just another tool in the arsenal.

When Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said *taqiyya* was important to Iran's foreign policy, it changed how they used it. Before, it just meant hiding what you believed. Now, Iran uses it to lie and trick other countries. This makes it difficult to know their true intentions.

The military uses of *taqiyya* are many and tricky. Iran often uses other groups to do its dirty work so it can deny involvement. This lets Iran mess with other countries without getting into a direct fight.

Believing that it's okay to lie for God gives Iranian soldiers a mental edge. Things that might bother other soldiers become religious duties, which makes them more committed and keeps their operations secret. It also means they can break promises if things change and it suits them. It all comes down to getting the job done no matter the cost.

Waiting for the Hidden Imam: The End of the World as We Know It

Shiite Muslims believe in the Hidden Imam (*Imam al-Mahdi*). This adds an end of the world angle to Iran's military thinking that makes it different from how other countries think about war. They believe that the Twelfth Imam disappeared a long time ago and will come back to make the world a fair place. No one but God knows when though. All they can do is prepare.

This belief lets Iran say its meddling in other countries is just getting things ready for the Hidden Imam's return. They think that getting rid of injustice and helping oppressed Muslims will help bring the Imam back. This turns what might look like just power grabs into religious acts. This is a long-held belief that spans generations.

The IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) often talks about the Hidden Imam. Commanders mention him in speeches, and publications talk about how the IRGC is helping to prepare for his return. This gives them a strong reason to take on dangerous missions and make big sacrifices. They are determined to see their beliefs turn into reality.

Because no one knows when the Hidden Imam will come back, Iran can say almost anything it does is helping to get ready for it. This lets them change their plans as they go while still saying they're doing what God wants. It is a very tricky position to be in, to be a part of something so much bigger than one's self.

Chapter 9: War Through a Poet's Eye - How Culture Shapes a Soldier's Heart

Rostam's Spirit: The Persian Warrior's Code

Think of Rostam as Iran's super-hero, a legend brought to life in Ferdowsi's epic poem, the Shahnameh. He's more than just an old story; he's a living example of what it means to be an Iranian soldier. Rostam shows them how to be strong, loyal to their country, and honorable, all at the same time.

There's this really sad story about Rostam fighting his own son, Sohrab, without knowing who he was. It teaches a hard lesson: sometimes, being a hero means making sacrifices that break your heart. This idea really hits home in the Iranian military, where putting the country and their beliefs first is a big deal, even if it means personal loss. It's like they're saying, I'm ready to give everything for what I believe in.

And get this, Rostam had to face seven crazy challenges called the Haft Khan. It's like a how-to guide for Iranian warriors: be brave, be smart, and don't forget to ask for help from above. These stories paint the picture of a soldier who can beat anyone, no matter how strong they seem, by using their brains and their faith. You can see how this fits with Iran's situation today. They might not have the fanciest tech, but they're ready to outsmart their enemies using what they have. This idea is pushed hard in military schools and even in the news.

You'll see Rostam's image everywhere – his lion-skin cloak, his horse Rakhsh, and that huge mace he carries. Iranian soldiers wear symbols that remind them of these old stories. It's like they're saying, We're part of a long line of heroes who have always defended Iran. This makes them feel like they're fighting for something bigger than themselves, something that has lasted for centuries.

The Shahnameh: A Playbook for War

The Shahnameh isn't just a book; it's like Iran's playbook for how to think about war. Written way back in the 10th century, it was meant to keep Persian culture alive. The stories in it still shape how the military thinks and acts today. It is their identity.

The Shahnameh tells the story of Iran always fighting Turan, which represents the enemy. Today, Iranian soldiers see themselves in that same story, defending their Islamic culture against threats from the West and other countries in the area. It's a constant battle of us versus them.

The poem also talks a lot about being a good soldier: being brave but also following orders. Rostam always listened to the king, even when he had his own ideas. This is a big deal in the IRGC, where commanders have to find a balance between doing what they think is right and respecting the leaders above them. It is a very sensitive distinction.

Many of the stories in the Shahnameh end in tragedy. This prepares soldiers for the idea that winning might come at a terrible cost. The willingness to accept loss for the sake of their principles is a theme that runs through the entire epic.

War Poetry: Words as Weapons

The war between Iran and Iraq created a ton of Persian poetry, which is now a part of Iranian military culture. These poems, often called Sacred Defence Poetry, mix old poetic styles with new ideas about sacrifice and standing up for what's right, which is holy to them.

Persian love poems are all about deep feelings and giving yourself for someone else. This became a way to talk about the war. Poets used images of lovers and wine to talk about the connection between a soldier and their faith. This made war seem like a spiritual experience, turning soldiers into almost holy figures.

This poetry isn't just for artists; it's used in military training too. Soldiers in the IRGC and Basij learn these poems to strengthen their beliefs and feel closer to each other. Memorizing these poems is like a spiritual exercise that gets them ready for battle by imbuing them with a heightened mental state.

Even today, this kind of poetry is still being written. The war in Syria and conflicts with other countries have inspired new poems that use the same old styles to talk about what's happening now. This keeps Persian culture alive and relevant to what soldiers are going through today.

The Art of War: Beauty in the Battle

There is something unique about Iranian military culture. It appreciates the beauty of war. It's not just about getting the job done. This love for beauty shows how they find meaning in struggle, sacrifice, and their faith.

Iranian military ceremonies are full of traditions from the old Persian courts. Parades and memorials use sights and sounds to create a strong emotional and spiritual experience. These events are like a show of force, talking about their values and what they're committed to, both to their own people and to the world.

They also put art and poetry in their military buildings and even on their weapons. They believe that this makes them stronger. Weapons have religious quotes and poems written on them, asking for protection. Military bases are designed with Islamic and Persian styles.

Even their military strategies have a sense of art to them. The mosaic defense strategy, for example, is like creating a work of art. Each piece comes together to form something that is not only useful but also beautiful. This shows how they believe that everything is connected, from their faith to their culture to their military actions.

Chapter 10: Lessons Learned from the Fire

The Sacred Defence: The Iran-Iraq War

The Iran-Iraq War, lasting eight years, became the defining event, shaping nearly every part of how Iran thinks about its military today. It was a real-world testing ground where ideas about fighting were put to the test, improved, and then deeply ingrained into their way of doing things.

At the start of the war, Iran quickly learned that the old ways of fighting, inherited from the time of the Shah (Pahlavi era), just weren't going to cut it. The revolution had purged many experienced military officers, leaving Iran with a weakened army. At the same time, Iraqi forces, backed by modern weapons from the Soviet Union and intel from the West, came pouring across the border. This tough situation forced Iranian military thinkers to come up with new strategies, which then became permanent parts of their military playbook.

Perhaps the biggest change in how they thought about war was the regular use of highly motivated volunteers in human wave attacks. These attacks led to huge losses, but they also showed a few important things that still guide Iranian strategy. First, strong faith and spirit can overcome a lack of equipment and resources if channeled in the correct way. Second, a willingness to take big losses can have a major impact by showing determination and making the enemy think twice. Third, mixing regular soldiers with irregular fighters (like volunteers) can create chances in battle that a regular army wouldn't have.

The war also created the idea of strategic depth. This means that Iran's large size and population can be used as advantages against enemies with better tech. Iranian forces learned to give up ground in exchange for time, letting the enemy advance while setting up counter-attacks that would hit them where they were weak. This meant accepting some temporary losses of land, but in return, they aimed to inflict heavy casualties on the advancing enemy.

During the war, Iran also started building its own defense industry, which gave them lasting abilities that still support their goals. Because of an international arms ban, Iran had to start making everything themselves, from bullets to missiles. At first, these products were basic and not very reliable, but they paved the way for the advanced military industry they have today.

The Lebanese Laboratory: Hezbollah and Fighting Through Others

Iran's support for Hezbollah during the Lebanese civil war was the first big success of their strategy of proxy warfare—fighting through other groups. This approach became a key part of Iran's regional strategy. The relationship started with Iranian soldiers (from the IRGC) going to Lebanon's Bekaa Valley in 1982. That became a model for how Iran would work with non-state groups across the Middle East.

The experience with Hezbollah taught Iran a few important things about working with proxies. First, groups that work with Iran need to have real support among the local population and be able to fight on their own. Iran had tried to create groups from scratch, but these efforts failed. Supporting groups that already had roots in the community worked much better. Second, Iran needed to guide these groups strategically but give them freedom to act on their own. Too much control from Tehran could hurt their local support and how well they fought.

The war between Hezbollah and Israel in 2006 was a critical test of Iran's proxy warfare ideas. Hezbollah was able to fight the Israeli military for 34 days, inflicting losses and limiting what the Israelis could do. That confirmed some key ideas about fighting in an asymmetric way. The conflict showed that well-trained and equipped non-state groups could have a big impact even against conventional armies.

The Syrian civil war (2011-2024) was another chance to test and improve Iran's ideas about proxy warfare. Iranian advisors from the IRGC, along with Hezbollah fighters, Afghan and Pakistani Shiite fighters, and Iraqi volunteers, worked together in a complex operation. This helped Iran achieve its goals while also providing valuable experience.

The Yemen Model: Houthis and Using Influence

Iran's relationship with the Houthis in Yemen shows the latest stage in how Iran thinks about proxy warfare. This situation shows both the potential and the limits of this kind of strategy. When the Houthis took over Sana'a in 2014 with some Iranian support, it gave Tehran a strategic tool that could disrupt Saudi Arabian security and threaten shipping in the Red Sea.

The conflict in Yemen has allowed Iran to test advanced weapons and tactics in a real war setting. The Houthis have used Iranian-supplied missiles and drones against Saudi targets. This has provided data about how well these weapons work and has shown that Iran can threaten key regional rivals through proxy forces. The attacks on ships in the Red Sea have demonstrated that by investing a relatively modest amount in proxy capabilities can create effects with worldwide implications.

The Houthis have also demonstrated how tough Iranian proxy networks can be, even when facing heavy military pressure. Despite years of airstrikes and ground attacks led by Saudi Arabia, the Houthis have been able to keep fighting and continue to pose a threat to regional stability. This confirms Iran's thinking that supporting non-state groups with local support and roots has advantages.

However, Yemen has also highlighted that proxy warfare has its limits as a strategy. While the Houthis have had some successes and have hurt their enemies, they haven't achieved a decisive win. The long conflict has created problems and humanitarian issues, which makes Iranian diplomacy more difficult. It also shows that it's hard to turn the capabilities of these groups into clear political wins.

The Gaza Gambit: October 7th and Thinking Wrong

The Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, and the fighting that followed, tested Iran's strategic ideas and proxy warfare abilities. Iran's Supreme Leader Khamenei called the attack necessary and timely, saying it was meant to disrupt talks between Israel and Saudi Arabia while showing that Iran could influence events in the region through proxy action.

At first, the conflict seemed to confirm some of Iran's strategic thinking. Hamas showed that it could surprise a technologically superior enemy, inflict heavy casualties, and capture ground. The group's ability to withstand a sustained Israeli attack confirmed Iran's belief that supporting well-prepared non-state groups has advantages.

However, the bigger strategic results of the conflict have been more problematic for Iran. Israel's actions against Hamas have weakened the group. Operations against Hezbollah leadership has also degraded Iran's proxy network. The failure to get the broader Axis of Resistance to support Hamas showed the limits of how well Iran can coordinate things in the region.

The conflict has also exposed weaknesses in Iran's strategic planning. Israel's ability to conduct sustained operations against multiple Iranian proxies at the same time is challenging Iran's

thinking about how well multi-front deterrence works. The targeting of Iranian nuclear sites and military commanders has shown that Iran isn't safe from retaliation just because it's geographically distant.

Chapter 11: The Shadow of Mahdi—Nuclear Dreams and the Last Line of Defense

The Nuclear Game Changer: Seeing Tech as a Gift

Iran's nuclear plans are a big deal. They show what the country really wants and what it believes in. Even if they say it's all for peaceful stuff, you can't just ignore that it could be used for war. It's tied to how Iran thinks about the world and its place in it. Having nukes would give them real power and also prove they're a major player in the region.

This whole thing started way back, but now it's got a totally different vibe because of the revolution. Putting the Revolutionary Guard (IRGC) in charge of the nuclear stuff, instead of regular folks, kind of tells you where they're going with this. And when you mix nuclear research with making missiles, well, it's pretty clear they're thinking about weapons, no matter what they say.

But it's not just about bombs and power. Iran's nuclear goals go deeper than that. Getting nukes would be like winning the ultimate contest, proving they're better than everyone else in terms of tech and faith. Plus, it would give them the muscle to push their beliefs around the region without anyone messing with them.

Think of the nuclear program as a symbol, too. Building this kind of tech shows Iran can do amazing things, even when the world tries to shut them out. It backs up what the government tells people about being strong and blessed. And it's a sign they're getting closer to their big goals.

Playing with Fire: How Things Could Get Out of Hand

If Iran starts throwing nukes into its military plans, things could get really dicey in the Middle East. Right now, it looks like they want to be able to make nukes without actually building them. That way, they can do what they want without taking all the heat.

Now, the way Iran thinks about nukes is different from how the West sees it. It's not about everyone being afraid to attack each other. It's more like nukes would let Iran be more aggressive,

knowing nobody would dare to strike back hard. They could cause trouble without worrying about getting crushed.

And here's where it gets really scary: Iran could use its nukes to protect its friends and fighters in other countries. These groups might do riskier things, knowing Iran has their back. This could set off a bunch of small fights that slowly turn into a huge mess nobody can control.

To make matters worse, Iran's religious beliefs add even more craziness to the mix. If they think nukes are part of some divine plan, they might take risks that make no sense to anyone else. Normal ways of thinking about war just might not apply here.

If Iran Goes Nuclear: What It All Means

If Iran gets its hands on nukes, it would be a total game changer. They'd be the top dog in the region, and nobody could mess with them. It would prove they were right to spend so much time and money on their military. It's not just about the weapons themselves; it's about what they stand for.

With nukes in their pocket, Iran would probably get bolder, not weaker. They'd feel safe enough to cause more trouble, knowing nobody would dare to attack them directly. They might use their friends in other countries to do even more risky stuff.

This would freak out Iran's neighbors, like Saudi Arabia. They might feel like they have to suck up to Iran or start building their own nukes. And Israel would be in a nightmare situation, facing nuclear threats from all sides for the first time.

The whole world would feel the effects. Iran getting nukes would show that anyone can do it, even if the world tries to stop them. This could encourage other countries to start building nukes, and it would make it harder to keep the peace.

Chapter 12: The Fire Still Burns – Today's Problems and How They Might Change

When the Bad Guys Fell Apart: Changing Plans When Things Get Tough

Think back to 2023-2025. Iran's group of allies in the region got seriously beat up. This was a major headache for Iran's military ideas, maybe the biggest since the end of their war with Iraq. Hamas in Gaza was weakened badly, the main guys in Hezbollah in Lebanon were taken out, and

the government of Syria fell apart. All this messed up the plans Iran had been building for like 40 years.

The moment Bashar al-Assad's government in Syria collapsed in December 2024, it hit Iran hard where it hurt. Syria had been super important. It was like the main road in Iran's land bridge, linking them all the way to the Mediterranean Sea. This road was how they sent supplies to Hezbollah and their other friends in the area. Losing Syria meant Iran had to rethink how to defend itself and how to fight using others.

How Iran reacted to all this shows both how strong they are and where they have limits. They said they would double the money they spend on defence. And it looks like they're putting less focus on using other groups to fight and more on their own military. It's like they realized that using other groups, which had worked for years, wasn't working so well anymore against enemies who wouldn't quit.

What all this means goes beyond just military stuff. It raises big questions about what role Iran will play in the region and how stable things are at home. Having those groups of allies gave Iran some protection and made them look strong, showing they had power and could make things happen in the region. If those groups are gone or weak, it could make Iran look weaker too, and people at home might not support the government so much.

New Tech and Changing Ideas

Iran's military ideas keep changing because of new tech and how things are changing in the world. Artificial intelligence, super-fast weapons, and advanced cyber capabilities all give Iran chances but also make things tricky for their strategic thinkers. Because Iran likes to make its stuff, they'll likely change these new technologies to fit how they already think instead of letting the tech completely change their plans.

Take drones, for example. Iran didn't just copy what other countries were doing. They made drones that fit their specific needs. They wanted drones that could stay in the air for a long time, that they could spread around easily, and that their allies could use too. That shows how their main goals shape the tech they build.

Ballistic missiles are still a big part of Iran's ability to show its power. They've been working on super-fast missiles and warheads that can move around so they can get past enemy air defences.

By using these missiles with their allies, they can launch attacks where Iran's missiles hit hard, and their allies on the ground can take advantage.

Cyber warfare is a new area where Iran is getting good, using its smart people and tech skills. They've shown they can attack important stuff like power plants and banks. By using cyberattacks with regular military moves and attacks by their allies, they have new ways to fight that are hard for enemies to deal with.

Economical Problems and Tough Choices

Iran's economy is in a tough spot because of international penalties, fighting in the region, and trouble at home. These money problems mean they have to make hard choices between keeping their military strong now and investing in new tech for the future. The government's choice to spend way more on defence, even though they have money problems, shows that they think the military is more important than taking care of people.

The penalties have made Iran find complicated ways to pay for military stuff and get weapons. The ways they've learned to get around the penalties have given them good experience in how to operate when the economy is in bad shape. But spending money on these networks means there's less money for other important things.

The link between the economy and the military is complicated. Making military stuff has led to new tech that helps the economy. But spending so much money on a big military and supporting allies means there's less money to invest in helping the economy grow.

Iran also has to deal with issues like fewer babies being born, young people leaving the country, and an aging population. It takes smart people to run complex military systems and support allies around the world, and Iran might not have enough people to do it all.

How People at Home See Things and What the Country Stands For

How military ideas and what people at home think are right are linked is key to understanding how Iran acts. The government's power depends on being able to show strength in the region and stand up to other countries. Military failures and allies getting weaker could hurt the government's image.

The protests in 2022 showed that many people at home, especially young people, don't like the way things are. This makes Iran weak spots that enemies could take advantage of. Also, the

government has to worry about keeping things calm at home, which takes away from what they can do in other countries.

The older generation of leaders is stepping down, and new leaders are taking over, which makes it hard to know what direction Iran will take. The leaders who lived through the Iran-Iraq War and the beginning of the revolution have different ideas than those who grew up under the Islamic Republic. This could lead to changes in military ideas or fights over what's important.

Mixing Persian pride with Islamic revolutionary ideas still motivates people and makes the government look good. But the balance between these things might change as things in the region change and people at home put pressure on the government. Being able to keep these ideas together will be key for the government to survive and be good at what it does.

Conclusion: The Eternal Vigil - Persia's Sacred Defense in the Modern Age

As the crescent moon rises over the ancient peaks of Alborz, casting silver shadows across the land where Zoroaster once proclaimed the eternal struggle between light and darkness, the Islamic Republic of Iran continues its sacred vigil against the forces it perceives as bent on its destruction. The military doctrine examined in these pages represents far more than a collection of strategic principles or tactical procedures - it embodies the soul of a civilization that has endured for millennia and now seeks to project its vision of divine justice across the breadth of the Islamic world.

The Synthesis of Ancient and Modern

Iranian military doctrine represents a unique synthesis of ancient Persian warrior traditions, Shiite theological imperatives, and contemporary strategic realities. Like the legendary Rostam, who wielded both physical prowess and divine favour in defence of Iran, the modern Islamic Republic employs both material capabilities and spiritual motivation in its confrontation with perceived enemies. This integration of the mystical and practical distinguishes Iranian strategic culture from purely secular approaches to military planning.

The doctrine's theological foundations provide both strength and vulnerability. The concept of *velayat-e faqih* creates command relationships that transcend ordinary military hierarchy, enabling extraordinary sacrifice and dedication. However, the eschatological dimensions of Iranian strategic thinking may lead to risk calculations that confound conventional deterrence models. The belief

that current conflicts serve divine purposes adds unpredictability to Iranian behaviour that adversaries must carefully consider.

The Evolution Under Pressure

The recent setbacks to Iran's proxy network and regional position have created the most significant challenge to Iranian military doctrine since the end of the Iran-Iraq War. The systematic degradation of the "Axis of Resistance" forces a fundamental reassessment of forward defence principles and proxy warfare strategies. Yet these challenges also demonstrate the adaptability that has characterized Iranian strategic culture throughout history.

The regime's response - dramatically increasing defence spending while apparently shifting resources from proxy operations to conventional capabilities - suggests recognition that strategic circumstances have changed. This evolution reflects not abandonment of core principles but adaptation of methods to changing realities. The theological imperatives that drive Iranian strategic behaviour remain constant even as tactical approaches evolve.

The Technological Transformation

Iran's emphasis on indigenous defence capabilities has created a military-industrial complex that increasingly approaches genuine technological independence. The development of ballistic missiles, naval systems, unmanned vehicles, and cyber warfare capabilities represents a strategic achievement that enhances long-term security while reducing vulnerability to external pressure. These capabilities provide concrete foundations for continued resistance regardless of changing regional alignments.

The integration of advanced technologies with traditional strategic principles creates new possibilities for implementing established doctrinal concepts. Drone swarms can execute human wave tactics without human casualties, while cyber warfare capabilities enable *taqiyya* on a global scale. The marriage of technological innovation with strategic tradition ensures that Iranian military doctrine will continue evolving while maintaining its essential character.

The Nuclear Threshold

Iran's nuclear program represents the potential culmination of decades of strategic development and the ultimate test of international determination to constrain Iranian ambitions. The achievement of nuclear weapons capability would fundamentally transform regional power relationships while validating the regime's claims about technological and spiritual superiority.

However, the program also creates escalation risks that could lead to conflicts beyond the control of any single party.

The theological dimensions of Iranian nuclear doctrine add complexity to traditional deterrence calculations. Decision-making influenced by eschatological considerations may not conform to rational actor models that assume mutual interest in avoiding catastrophic outcomes. The integration of nuclear capabilities with proxy warfare and asymmetric strategies creates particularly dangerous scenarios for uncontrolled escalation.

The Eternal Struggle

The Islamic Republic's military doctrine emerges from a worldview that sees current conflicts as part of an eternal struggle between justice and tyranny, faith and unbelief, the oppressed and their oppressors. This cosmic framework provides powerful motivation for continued resistance despite temporary setbacks. The doctrine's theological foundations ensure that strategic adaptation will occur within established ideological parameters rather than representing fundamental change.

The cultural narratives that inform Iranian strategic thinking - from the ancient tales of Rostam to the modern poetry of the Sacred Defence - create emotional and spiritual resources that sustain resistance across generations. These stories teach that apparent defeat can become ultimate victory if it serves righteous purposes. The willingness to accept tragic costs in pursuit of higher goals provides strategic resilience that purely material calculations cannot capture.

The Path Forward

As Iran confronts an uncertain future marked by regional setbacks, economic pressure, and domestic challenges, the military doctrine examined in these pages will continue evolving while maintaining its essential character. The synthesis of Persian nationalism, Shiite theology, and revolutionary ideology provides sufficient flexibility to accommodate tactical changes while preserving strategic continuity.

The regime's survival through four decades of external pressure and internal challenge demonstrates the resilience of this doctrinal synthesis. The current crisis, while severe, represents another test of the system's adaptability rather than its final judgment. The theological foundations that justify accepting enormous costs in pursuit of ultimate objectives provide resources for enduring temporary defeats.

The broader implications of Iranian military doctrine extend beyond regional security to fundamental questions about international order and the role of ideology in strategic competition. The Islamic Republic's persistence in pursuing its vision despite overwhelming material disadvantages challenges assumptions about the inevitable triumph of secular, rational approaches to international relations. The doctrine's theological dimensions suggest that conflicts involving deeply held religious beliefs may not conform to traditional models of strategic behaviour.

In the end, Iranian military doctrine represents more than strategic planning - it embodies a civilization's understanding of its place in history and its responsibility to future generations. Like the eternal flames that burn in Zoroastrian temples, commemorating the cosmic struggle between light and darkness, Iran's sacred defence continues regardless of temporary victories or defeats. The doctrine examined in these pages will endure as long as the Islamic Republic itself, adapting to new circumstances while maintaining its essential commitment to resisting what it perceives as forces of global oppression.

As the muezzin's call echoes across the rooftops of Tehran, summoning the faithful to prayer in the pre-dawn darkness, Iran's military commanders and spiritual leaders continue their vigilant watch, confident that history and providence favour their cause. The sacred defence continues, sustained by ancient wisdom and modern technology, Persian pride and Shiite piety, the heroic legacy of Rostam and the sacrificial example of Hussein. In this synthesis of the temporal and eternal, the strategic and spiritual, lies both the strength and the mystery of Iranian military doctrine.

Unconventional Sword

I would like to end with this like. Zulfiqar, the Iranian military doctrine is contradictory and complex, Zulfiqar is, on the surface a conventional weapon a sword, yet in its very design it is profoundly unconventional. It appears offensive, but when one truly examines it – remembering the words of Allah: *"Fight in the cause of Allah only against those who wage war against you, but do not exceed the limits. Allah does not like transgressors"*- its essence is revealed as defensive. In its history, Zulfiqar placed great emphasis on the idea of the Imam, a linage that resonates with and supports the concept of *Velayat-e Faqih* in this way, Zulfiqar stands as a true embodiment of the Iranian military doctrine.

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